

RISE Specialists: FREE to Think Outside the Box

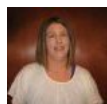
by Charles Lieske, RISE Program Specialist, Administrative Office, Lincoln

After 5 years, the RISE program continues to see success in serving adult and juvenile probationers with skill-building services targeted at improving their educational and employment opportunities. Since implementation, 73% of probationers who have graduated from the RISE Program did not return to the Probation system after one year.

I contend that an important element of our success is our structure. RISE Program Specialists are FREE to think outside the box. They are:

- ⇒ Flexible in how they administer the program;
- ⇒ Relationship builders who motivate through trust;
- ⇒ Engaging probationers in a meaningful way; and
- ⇒ Empathetic while maintaining accountability.

In this issue of *On the Horizon*, we'll take a look at some examples of these principles at work in the field.



Engaging Those Needing a GED

by Nikki Davis, RISE Program Specialist, District #8, O'Neil

Most jobs require a high school diploma or GED. One of the main points of the RISE program is to focus on education. So how do we engage people who have never finished high school?

The General Education Development Test (GED) consists of five tests covering different subjects including language arts/writing, social studies, science, reading and mathematics.

Once a probationer is referred to the RISE program, your area RISE Specialist can engage him/her in obtaining a GED in different ways.

- 1) The RISE Specialist may help the probationer register for GED classes and/or testing.
- 2) S/he may set up GED study groups where probationers can come to study materials provided by the GED instructor.
- 3) The RISE Specialist can seek

authorization to conduct pre-tests for the GED instructor.

- 4) S/he can also pursue setting up outside tutoring if there are areas of struggle.

After a probationer successfully obtains a GED, a RISE Specialist may assist in furthering his/her education through applications to tech schools, community colleges, or universities.

In 2014, the GED test will be changing. Test-takers will no longer use pencil and paper; everything will be completed on a computer, including essay writing. There will be two separate scoring categories: high school curriculum knowledge and preparedness for entering college or a career. Starting January 2, 2014, anyone who has not completed all GED tests with passing scores and the required overall point total will have to start the entire test battery over.



RISE and Shine!

by Carrie Joyce, RISE Program Specialist, District #9, Grand Island

In my job, I assist juveniles and adults with education and employment skills. With adults, I cover a variety of skill-based topics, such as putting résumés together and how to explain their convictions during the application and interview process with employers. I also aid in helping them find the resources to get their GED or help with college applications.

With my juveniles, my focus is on their education. I track their grades, attendance, and behaviors. Most of my juveniles don't have a lot of people in their corner. Having an adult that can be there for them and truly show encouragement and faith in their abilities means a lot to my juveniles.

Having the ability to build relationships while working on skills with my probationers is one of the reasons RISE is so successful. I have one young lady that was constantly late for school or was missing school all together. When I asked her why she was missing school, she stated that she sometimes wakes up late and after taking her sister to school she just does not go herself.

I asked her if it would help if I gave her a wake-up call in the morning. At the time I was joking with her; however, she looked at me and said, "Yes, that would help." She gave me her cell phone number and I told her that if I see a tardy or absence again, I would start calling her when I wake up in the morning.

I ended up calling her a few times. When I would call I would say, "RISE and shine!" She would laugh and say, "OK, I'm up." Her attendance improved significantly while in my program and her grades improved as well.

Success stories like this, and the bonds I make with those I serve, make my job within Nebraska State Probation a blessing in my life.

Also In this issue...

BUILDING BRIDGES AND FOLLOWING UP	2
OFFERING FLEXIBILITY WHEN TEACHING LIFELONG SKILLS	2
CELEBRATING SERVICE	2



Building Bridges to Community Resources; Following Up

by Nichole Swanson, AS, LADC, RISE Program Specialist, District #6, Fremont/Blair

Having empathy for people does not mean feeling sorry for them or making excuses for them. Important points I consider when working with probationers:

- 1) People don't care what you know until they know you care;
- 2) We have two ears and one mouth and need to remember a probationer is the expert of him/herself and circumstance, so we are listeners.

After listening to probationers' needs, RISE Specialists can share information about resources they find while networking in their communities. Helping probationers find solutions for their physical, emotional, or mental barriers keeps them moving forward.

During the program, the probationer

has the opportunity to build skills and is encouraged to complete the program to achieve this. To be an effective support, RISE Specialists organize and use best practices to maximize program benefits.

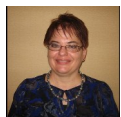
- ⇒ Preparation; file set up, informational handouts ready, appointment cards, options for current and upcoming session times and dates.
- ⇒ Practice; providing an environment where probationer growth is expected, where history is learned from and adjustments made to promote educational and employment opportunities.

RISE Specialists follow up with program graduates at three and six months after completion. We support probationers

in a non-judgmental manner, helping to identify barriers and redirect toward concrete solutions that empower him/her to 'rise above' current circumstances.

The follow up contact is simply a conversation to see how the probationer is doing. It is an invitation for continuing support and an opportunity for referral to appropriate bridges of support in the community. The file format aides in this process to keep the talk focused on the probationer's educational/employment goals.

Many times I have received feedback and been encouraged that using the skills have dramatically improved probationers' lives, with comments such as, "Who knew that I would receive the help I needed by being on probation!"



RISE Offers Flexibility when Teaching Lifelong Study Skills

By Katie Rea, RISE Program Specialist, District #11, McCook

As RISE Specialists, we know it is very important to identify how each of our probationers learns naturally. We can then use specific teaching methods for a probationer's learning style.

The way our brain remembers and processes information defines our learning style. We are born with our learning style and we tend to be more dominant in one type of style than another. We can develop different learning styles depending on what is being taught. The seven different learning styles are:

- **Visual**, seeing the material;
- **Auditory**, hearing what is being taught;
- **Kinesthetic**, physically using body, hands and sense of touch;
- **Linguistic**, using words in speech and writing;
- **Mathematical**, using logic, reasoning and systems;
- **Interpersonal**, social learning in a group setting;
- **Solitary**, learning by yourself in self-study.

Traditional schooling will mainly use linguistic and logical teaching methods, relying on reading textbooks and classroom participation, with lots of repetition and exams for reinforcement and review.

It is easy to see the potential problems some frustrated students can face year after year because their dominant learning

style does not match traditional teaching methods.

When probationers understand how they learn naturally, it gives former struggling students the opportunity to develop their own appropriate study skills. This foundation will support probationers throughout their academic life.

RISE Specialists also teach probationers how to develop lifelong study skills by encouraging them to deliberately plan study sessions. By considering their responses to the following questions, probationers can begin to understand the barriers they may have that keep them from developing a study plan:

- When do you have your highest energy and concentration levels?
- How long can you study before you lose your focus and need a break?
- Is there a quiet location with good light you can designate as your study area?

RISE Specialists challenge probationers to eliminate as many disruptions as possible for their situation, and to start with the most difficult assignment first, when their concentration and energy levels are at their best.

RISE Specialists explore ways probationers can structure study time for their situation. They teach options for showing ownership of this commitment by scheduling study sessions on the family calendar or planner. This is an excellent reminder and communication tool. Knowing ahead of time when and where you will study shows responsibility and reinforces organization and time management skills.

For me, there is nothing more gratifying as a RISE Specialist than to witness probationers succeed in building learning life skills.



Kathy Wagoner-Wiese, Dist. 10, with her 2012 project display.

Celebrating Service

RISE Program Specialists share their stories in many ways. On May 23, 2013, the second annual Symposium of Service will be held at the Center for People in Need in Lincoln, featuring projects from AmeriCorps programs from across the state, including RISE.